

SEA TURTLE REPORT

Caging Sea Turtle Nests

By Maria Lamb

Marco's beach is beginning to reflect the height of sea turtle season, dotted with caged sea turtle nests. Just underneath the warm sand, tiny sea turtles inside their fragile eggshells are counting the days to their awe-inspiring journey to the ocean.

The daily sea turtle monitors have been very busy protecting these nests, marking each nest with stakes, yellow caution tape, and a sign to provide protection and alert vehicular traffic and the public away from the nests. Monitors take a GPS reading for each nest location and for crawl and record this information in their data sheet for further evaluation.

The Marco Island nests are covered with a protected screen or a cage, and the two-by-four-inch screen openings are large enough to allow the exit of hatchlings but are small enough to prevent mammalian depredation, according to the Collier County Sea Turtle Protection Program. In addition, nest cages provide additional protection by preventing predators from digging under the screen as well as from the surface downward. All cages are observed daily for evidence of predation, but unfortunately, cages cannot protect nests from tidal inundations.

Nightly Beach Report – Artificial Lighting

According to the Collier County Sea Turtle Protection Program, "Artificial lighting continues to be the greatest human threat to emerging hatchlings. In 2025, for the five beaches monitored by Collier County, a total of 195 nests were affected by artificial lighting, with

emerging hatchlings becoming disoriented as they attempted to make their way to the Gulf."

For the month of May's Nightly Beach Report, 46 building light violations were referred to Code Enforcement for follow-up. Nine sea turtle lighting violations are scheduled to appear at the Code Magistrate on June 30.

From May 1 through October 31, 2026, the City will continue to enforce Chapter 54, Article V, Sea Turtle Protection to reduce activities that may adversely affect nesting sea turtles and hatchlings. Enforcement efforts will primarily address lighting violations and prohibited manmade objects left on the beach after 9:00 PM.



A screen cage over a sea turtle nest provides additional protection. Photo by Maria Lamb



Photo by Arsenio Nunez

This photo from Sand Dollar Island (Big Marco Pass) shows crawl marks from a Loggerhead Sea Turtle, indicating she came up over the berm towards the lagoon and back to the Gulf – she did not nest. Sea turtle monitors record false crawls on their data sheet.

Sea Turtle Activity June 16-22, 2026

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	154	193	168	196	0	0	0
Delnor Wiggins	44	51	40	68	0	0	0
Vanderbilt	127	187	147	144	0	1	0
Parkshore	152	145	140	199	0	0	0
City of Naples	172	166	156	170	0	0	0
Keewaydin Is.	367	347	560	497	0	0	0
Sea Oat Island	16	8	20	8	0	0	0
Marco Island	103	55	161	187	0	0	0
Kice and Cape Romano	108	94	194	119	0	0	0
10,000 Islands	94	97	115	103	0	0	0
Collier County Totals	1337	1343	1701	1691	0	1	0

To report dead, injured or disoriented sea turtles on Marco call 239-289-9736 or 239-289-9687



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